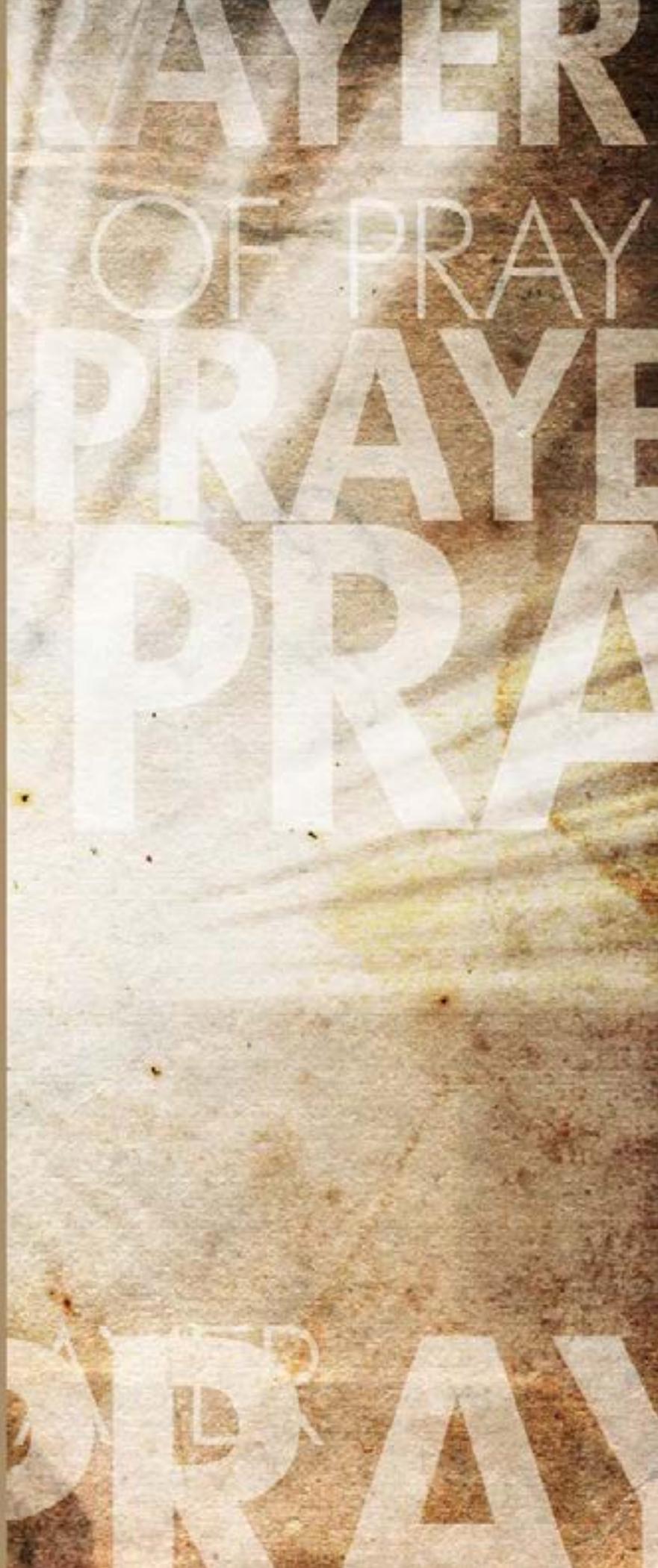




**NATIONAL
ADULT
SUNDAY SCHOOL
CURRICULUM
2019–2020**

**Bishop Rex Waddell, Chief Bishop
Bishop Aaron Scruggs, Vice-Chief Bishop
Overseer David Flournoy, Sr.,
National Sunday School Superintendent**





OFFICE OF THE CHIEF BISHOP

Church of the Living God (C.W.F.F.)

8901 Pleasant View Drive

Fairview Heights, Illinois 62208



Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

–2 Tim 2:15 (KJV)

The Apostle Paul instructs us not just to simply read the bible as if musing through some Hollywood tabloid or popular novel but rather we are to study God’s word so that we may improve the condition of our hearts and minds. Such a learning endeavor requires arduous effort on our part, but results in us becoming able to “rightly” understand God’s word of truth. In addition, the apostle reminds us that we do not conduct the study of God’s word so that our studious accomplishments might evoke the praise and admiration of men but we study the word of God so that we might experience divine acceptance and the approval of God. It is the right division or distribution of God’s word that enables us to supply each portion of the body of Christ with that which is necessary for our spiritual growth and Christian maturity. Jesus informed us that his words contain both spirit and life and possesses the power to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Consequently, we can achieve no greater spiritual relationship than to say that “we abide in Christ and that his word abides in us.”

We wish to thank the contributing members of the newly organized National Board of Instruction, National Media Design and administrative staff of

the Church of the Living God (C.W.F.F.) for this body of work. These lessons embody the general theme for our 2020 National Convention and are presented to our temples in hope of bringing about a shared mindset and spiritual perspective for ministry throughout the entire Brotherhood.

You will find lessons for all ages here; and we are asking that each temple would support this effort to encourage national church unity by teaching our national Sunday School curriculum every first Sunday of the month beginning on Sunday, August 4, 2019. We have exhausted every effort to make these lessons both informative and “user friendly.” Nevertheless, we welcome your input and any ideas you might have to help us improve on this work.

So now, it is our heart’s desire and our prayer to God that this body of work would be a tremendous blessing to your local church and to this national ministry.

All For His Glory,

Bishop Rex M. Waddell
Chief Bishop

Overseer David B. Flourney, Sr.
Church of the Living God (C.W.F.F.)
National Sunday School Superintendent



“**If you know your Bible, the Sunday School needs you, if you don't know your Bible you need the Sunday School.**”

Dear Sunday School Attendees:

We welcome you to join in with us in our excitement of a new beginning. Under the leadership of Chief Bishop Rex Waddell, the Church of the Living God has utilized the God given talents of its own members to write Sunday School lessons for our brotherhood. We have written twelve lessons for the year, one for each month. One Sunday a month we will be uniform in our brotherhood in teaching the same lesson.

The prayers of the Sunday School staff is that teachers will study, and students will learn and apply these lessons to our daily lives, so God will get the Glory. Let's get an understanding in the things of Christ, so we are not tossed to and fro and become easily defeated. Preaching brings the man out of the world, it is teaching and learning that bring the world out of the man.

The Sunday School is one of the educational arms of the church. Each member of the church is also a member of the Sunday School, so come out and let's learn Christ.

God Bless,

Overseer David B. Flourney, Sr.

Missionary Brenda L. Flourney
Church of the Living God (C.W.F.F.)
National Director of Christian Education



We are preparing youth to become great leaders in the church and in their communities.



Greetings,

I count it all joy to be a part of a new era and a privilege to work with an exceptional team of God's people to implement a new concept to help train and strengthen the children of God as they grow spiritually.

Our Christian Education team will be enhancing the educational experience through classes, training, fine arts, music, and various other ministries that will strengthen and develop each one for a more successful Christian walk and to be more knowledgeable for kingdom building in our brotherhood.

We are also preparing our youth to become great leaders not only in our church but in their communities. This journey is a collaborative effort between all ministries and leaders who are equip to impart sound doctrine and teach church history effectively so that everyone will be able to fluently tell the history of our church and effectively be able to draw others to want to be a part of a church with a rich heritage.

We are looking for F.A.T. (Faithful, Available and Trainable) people to be a part of this spiritual direction that is being led under our new leadership of Chief Bishop Rex Waddell and Vice-Chief Bishop Aaron Scruggs. We are excited and looking forward to seeing strength and growth not only individually but in our local temples, our districts and our National Brotherhood.

God Bless you all,

Missionary Brenda L. Flourney



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LESSON ONE



JESUS TEACHES ON PRAYER

TEXT

Psalm 139

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

Luke 11:1–4 & Matthew 6:5–13

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me...
—Psalm 139 (NIV)

LESSON AIMS

1. **To examine prayer**
using the guidelines that Jesus established in the text
2. **To explore**
means of implementing Jesus's teachings to effectively impact our prayer

INTRODUCTION

Prayer saturates the Bible from beginning to end. It plays a crucial role in the communion between the creator and man. Ask any believer and they will likely affirm that prayer is essential to a Christian's life. Yet, many struggle with maintaining a meaningful and intimate dialogue with God. We can improve our prayer life by incorporating the teachings of Christ on this matter.

Luke 11:1–4 King James Version

1 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. **2** And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. **3** Give us day by day our daily bread. **4** And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. See also Matthew 6: 5–13

DISCUSSION

Matthew 6: 5–8; Luke 11: 1

The Bible records some 25 references to Jesus praying. Having seen the results of the prayers of Jesus and of John's followers, the disciples desired the intimacy and power that came from communication with the Father. No doubt the disciples were versed in the traditional Jewish prayer mode of adoration, praise, and doxology. They likely observed that John's disciples' prayers incorporated petitions and supplications. In response to their request, Christ instructs them in the manner of prayer.

Prayer is both an innate and acquired skill. Prayers can flow spontaneously and can also be enhanced by study and by simply praying. It is vital that prayer is sincere and comes from the heart. Christ sternly warns against hollow repetition and coming before the Father for a mere spectacle before men.

- What is a "closet prayer"? How does it contrast with a hypocritical prayer? (Matt 6: 5–6)
- What are the results of each? How does a private prayer contrast with a public prayer?
- If the Father knows what we have need of, why pray?
- Who has inspired your prayer life?



Matthew 6: 9–13; Luke 11: 2a–4

"When you pray say." and " After this manner pray..."
"Christ illustrates with a beautiful model prayer that can be emulated and wisely expanded upon by all believers. In this manner they could bring all of their concerns in a direct and concise way before God. This prayer is commonly known as the 'Lord's Prayer,'" however, it is actually the 'Disciples Prayer.'. There are elements of the prayer that are inappropriate for the sinless Christ to pray.

The prayer may be broken down into sections of; invocation, adoration, petition and doxology. To invoke is to call upon for favor at the beginning of a process or event. Adoration is to offer praise. To petition is to solemnly or earnestly request something from one in authority. Doxology is the concluding words of praise to God.

Identify the divisions of the prayer and explore the meaning of each clause. Are there other possible categories? What topics were covered in Jesus' prayer?

- What is notable about how Jesus addresses God?
- What is the intercessory aspect of the prayer? What is notable about the use of "us" and "we"?
- What is the conditional clause of the prayer?
- How can the Disciple's prayer become a mere ritual?

CONCLUSION

God provides prayer as a mechanism of communicating with His people. When we pray, we dialogue with the supreme creator who greatly desires to hear us. Also, we have the confidence that when we pray, He longs to respond according to our best interest. Sincere prayer is a state of heart and mind as much as spoken words. A prayer can be as brief as one or two words," Thank you", Help!" Prayer provides the greatest access to the awesome power of God. One of the most important prayers we may utter is, "Lord teach us to pray."

For further discussion: Tertullian, the second century Black theologian of north Africa suggested that the Lord's prayer summarizes the gospel. What parallels do you see between the disciple's prayer and the gospel message?



LESSON TWO



CHRIST'S PRAYER TO THE FATHER

DEVOTIONAL SCRIPTURE

Psalm 19

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

John 17

READ TEXT

John 17: 1–26

OUTLINE

- I. Verses 1–8—Jesus prays for himself
- II. Verses 9–19—Jesus prays for his disciples
- III. Verses 20–26—Jesus prays for future believers

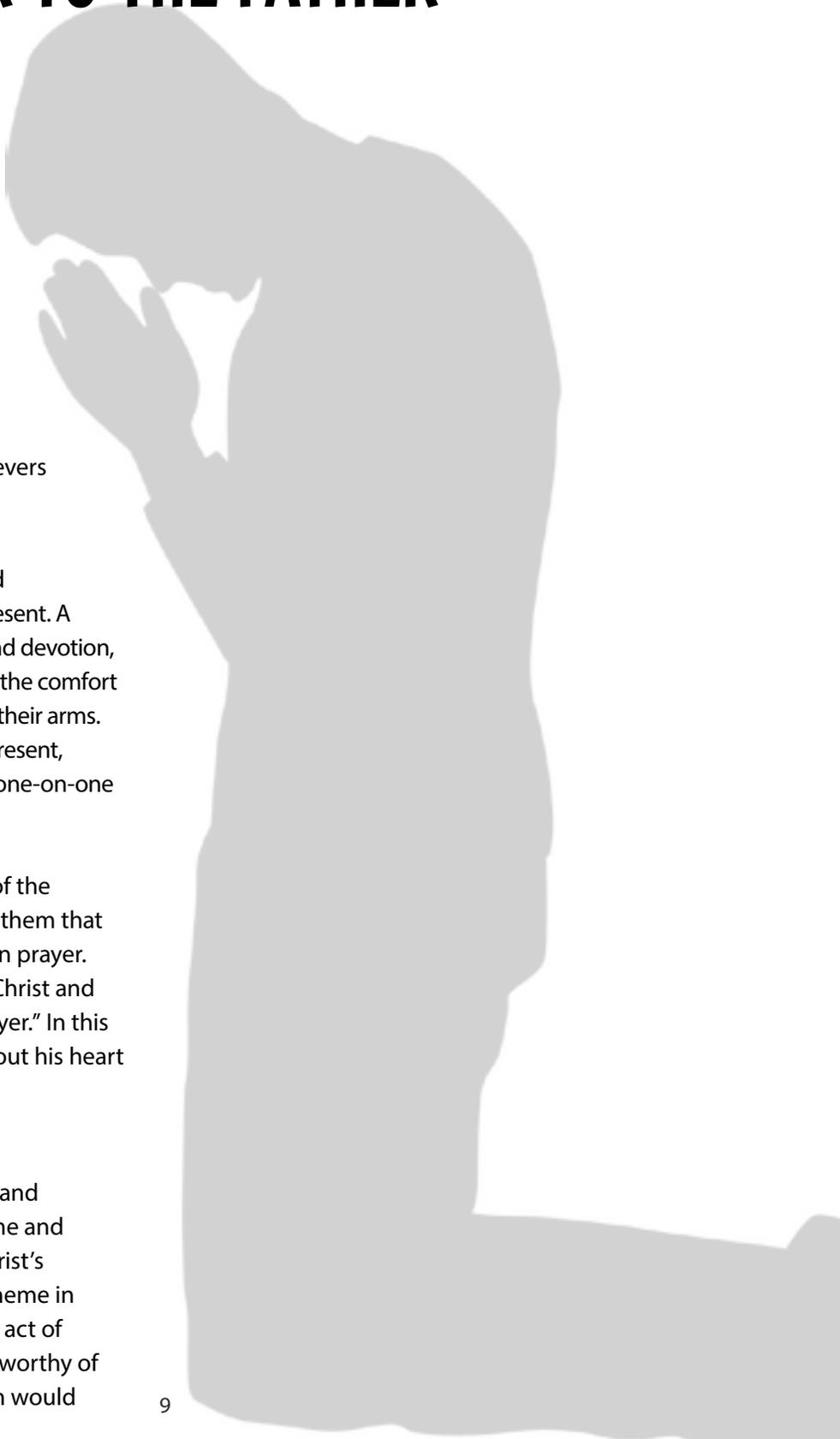
INTRODUCTION

A precious gift of God is a believer's state of God consciousness; a sense that the father is ever present. A child may be aware of his or her parent's love and devotion, nevertheless, every now and then they long for the comfort and reassurance of a kiss, or to be comforted in their arms. Such is the nature of prayer. While God is ever present, prayer provides an opportunity for an intimate one-on-one encounter, especially in difficult times.

Following the Passover Supper, the washing of the disciples' feet, and giving final instructions to them that the father had given him, Jesus turns to God in prayer. This prayer is the longest recorded prayer of Christ and has been called the "the Lord's High-Priestly Prayer." In this "Holy of Holies" prayer we see Jesus pouring out his heart to the Father.

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIMSELF

Jesus begins with the relational word, Father, and repeatedly uses the term. Jesus' time had come and we are witness to an intimate snap shot of Christ's communication with his Father. A recurrent theme in the opening prayer is that of glorification, the act of being made God-like with holy splendor and worthy of heavenly honor and praise. Jesus' glorification would





sustain him for the redemptive task before him and also bring glory to the Father. He prays for himself to the end that others will be blessed through Him.

How did Jesus glorify God and how did the Father glorify the Son?

- How is eternal life defined? (verse 3)
- What work did Christ finish that God had given him to do? (Verse 4)
- What comfort did Jesus likely find in this prayer?

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES

In these petitions Jesus has specific requests. Specificity elevates a person or situation personally before God and focuses attention on the issue at hand. Prayer does change "things" and it also changes and equips people to effect God's will. At this time, Christ does not pray for the world in its unbelief but for those God has given him.

- What were the specific petitions made on the disciple's behalf? (verses 11, 13, 15, 17,).
- Which of these gifts of God have you experienced and which do you need to seek more earnestly after?
- How are Christians sanctified?

JESUS PRAYS FOR ALL FUTURE BELIEVERS

In the latter portion of the prayer Jesus speaks prophetically of all that will come to a saving knowledge

of him as a result of his work by way of the cross. Again, He prays for the ultimate unity between all believers just as that which exist between He and the Father (verses 11, 21). Jesus concludes the prayer as he began calling upon the Father (and righteous Father) with reverence and adoration. The last petition for believers is a passionate plea for an indwelling of Godly love and the Spirit of Christ.

- What is the goal of Christian unity? (verse 21–23)
- What evidence do you find in the prayer for the pre-existence of Christ?
- What is the manifestation of Christian perfection? (verse 23)

CONCLUSION

As Jesus anticipates his ascension, his prayer centers around three concerns, the imminent salvific conclusion to his earthly ministry, his concerns for those close to him and for the future church. His prayer petitions are intentional and specific. The prayer for himself is a selfless supplication for the benefit of the Father and for those who believe. Two thousand years later we yet benefit from the prayers of Christ. We too have a powerful tool in prayer to effect positive change and to cover love ones with godly protection.

May we pattern our prayers after Christ for the welfare of others and for the glorification of God. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen!

LESSON ONE



FORGIVENESS: AN UNDERUSED WEAPON

TEXT

Luke 15:11–20, 25–32

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

Genesis 2: 15–17, Matthew 6: 14–15, John 3: 16, II Peter 3: 9

INTRODUCTION

Forgiving one another, especially as Christian brothers and sisters, is a concept taught to us by our Lord Jesus himself. Forgiveness is at the core of his heart, for it is, what allows us, to be in relationship with him and his heavenly Father.

God's willingness to forgive us, is what brought about the defeat of the plan of the enemy of our souls. Satan has always and still does desire to have mankind spend eternity in the torments of hell with him.

And truth be told we are certainly deserving of such a fate! For according to Romans 3: 23 all of us (like our fore-parents Adam & Eve) have sinned, have come short of God's glorious standard of righteousness. Romans 6:23 makes it clear that the wages of sin is death.

In every instance the penalty for sin is spiritual death (Genesis 2: 17) which is eternal separation from God forever in that place of torment, with Satan.

But God, our great God, was not willing that any of us should perish, not willing that we wind up in that horrible place, therefore He sent his only begotten son, even the Lord Jesus Christ himself, to make a way of escape for us. That's why on a hill called Calvary, The Lord Jesus, who knew no sin, took all of our sin upon himself, and paid

for our sins by allowing his own precious blood to be shed, and his own holy body to be broken, and then he gave his own sinless life as complete payment for the sin we committed! Because of what God the Son, did, God the Father, could pardon us, could forgive us, for our sins!

Forgiving us, he wiped the slate clean and allowed us to start over with him (that's what being born again is all about!) God's willingness to forgive, has completely defeated the plan of our enemy! For none who has received God's forgiveness, will spend their eternity in that place of torment. God's use of this unusual weapon defeated the plan of Satan and if we use it, we too will be able to be victorious over our enemy time and time again!

Luke 15: 11–20, 25–28, 31–32

11 And he said, a certain man had two sons. **12** And the younger of them said to his father, Father give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. **14** And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. **15** And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into the fields to feed swine: **16** And he would



fain have filled his belly with the husk that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. **17** And when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! **18** I will arise, and go to my Father, and I will say unto him, Father I HAVE SINNED against heaven and before thee, **19** And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. **20** And he arose, and came to his father, But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

25 Now his elder son was in the field: and he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard misick and dancing. **26** And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. **27** And he said unto him, thy brother is come, and thy Father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. **28** And he was angry, and would not go in, therefore came his father out and entreated him.

31 And he said unto him, Son thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. **32** It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again: and was lost and is found.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. What was the sin in heart of the younger son that led him to make such a request of his Father?
2. What did God allow to happen to the younger son that helped him to come to himself?
3. What character trait did the younger son develop as a result of his negative experience in the far country?
4. Did the younger son ask for forgiveness?
5. What was the result of the father's forgiveness?
6. What hurt or harm did the younger son do to his older brother?
7. Did the elder brother forgive his younger brother?
8. What did the devil accomplish through the elder brother's failure to forgive?
9. What did God accomplish through the Father's willingness to forgive?

LESSON PURPOSE

To show the forgiving heart of the Father and remind us that we have graciously been forgiven

To remind us that without forgiveness we cannot move forward and the devil wins!

To show for relationships (be they family, church, friendships) to thrive, forgiveness is a must.

To show that forgiveness is a most effective weapon in our fight against the devil!

LESSON TWO



THE LOOK & SOUND OF REAL FORGIVENESS

TEXT

Genesis 27: 30–36, 41, Genesis 33: 4, Luke 15: 20–23

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

Genesis 25: 23–28, Genesis 27: 1–29, Matthew 18: 21, 22, 35

INTRODUCTION

FORGIVENESS: Often people who claim to love God, and live to please him fail in this most important grace. Much destruction, can and has come from unforgiveness. Marriages and families have been destroyed and all kinds of relationships have been damaged. Ministries of the church have been hindered and their effectiveness all but eradicated, because of someone's unforgiving heart.

The world has a counterfeit concept of forgiveness that in no way measures up to Real Forgiveness that is presented to us in today's lesson.

True forgiveness is liberating, both for the forgiver and the one who is forgiven. Forgiveness will cast aside anger, dig up roots of bitterness, and break the grip of revenge on the heart.

It clears the ground for the plantings of peace and renewed harmony and makes room for joy to grow and flourish. Forgiveness allows trust to be restored and reconciliation to take place.

Forgiveness is healing. It causes broken hearts to mend, and disturbed minds to rest.

Forgiveness is uniting it begins the process of bringing warring parties back together in peace.

Forgiveness is a most accurate weapon, able to destroy years of angry grudge holding!

Forgiveness is a powerful medicine and is often just what Holy Spirit will order!

Is it any wonder that we are instructed and encouraged over and over again in the Word of our God to forgive one another!

Genesis 27: 30–36, 41; Genesis 33:4

30 And it came to pass as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. **31** And he also had made savory meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my Father arise and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. **32** And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau. **33** And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said Who? Where is he that hath taken venison and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? Yea and he shall be blessed. **34** And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father Bless me, even me also O my father. **35** And he said thy brother came with subtilty and hath taken away thy blessing. **36** And he said is he not rightly



named Jacob? For he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright and behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?

41 And Esau hated Jacob, because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother Jacob.

Genesis 33: 4

And Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept.

Luke 15: 20–23

And he arose and came unto his father, But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. **21** And the son said unto him, Father I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. **22.** But the father said to his servants Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet; **23.** And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it and let us eat and be merry!

DIGGING DEEPER

1. What exactly was the wrong that Jacob did to his twin brother?
2. What did the devil accomplish by enticing Jacob to sin against his brother?

3. Did anyone encourage or support Jacob in his wrong doings?
4. Jacob and the prodigal son both did gain some personal benefit from their sinful actions, but did they lose anything?
5. What was the fear that Jacob lived with because of his sinful actions towards Esau?
6. How did Esau express to Jacob the fact that he had forgiven him?
7. How did the Father in the parable of Luke 15, express his forgiveness to his son?
8. Can you name anyone else in the Bible who made sure that those who had wronged him knew that he had forgiven them?
9. Can forgiveness take place before it is asked for?

LESSON PURPOSE

1. To show that evil can be overcome with the good called forgiveness.
2. To show that real forgiveness can lead to reconciliation if both parties want it.
3. To show that true forgiveness is celebrated in heaven and ought to be celebrated by us as well!
4. Can you name the sights and sounds that accompanied real forgiveness in both accounts?

LESSON ONE



LOVE

TEXT

John 13: 34–35

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

Matthew 5: 43–46, 1Corinthians 13: 4–8, 1Corinthians 13: 1–3, Galatians 5: 22–23, John 3: 16–17, John 15: 9–17, Ephesians 5: 22–26



A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you...

–John 13: 34-35 (NIV)

INTRODUCTION

God is Love, this is a statement or saying many people use today. Love is a very popular term used in many conversations today. Love between a husband and wife, love between parents and children, love between significant others, love in the extended family unit, and love in the church of God. We hear these words a lot in these arenas "I Love You" and what I have learned is that we use this word very often and lack the true meaning and power of what this really means.

Jesus Christ the son of God, born of a virgin, entered into this world to live among mankind and to be an example of what it looks like to live holy, righteous, and to love. The church's main goal is to be the light of the world and to be the example of what it looks like to live holy, righteous, and loving, in a corrupt and sinful world, but because of the lack of understanding and teaching on the truth of the power of love we have gotten away from the example of love from our Lord Jesus Christ, and have picked up a superficial man made and defined example of love and it has ripped families apart, ruined many relationships, and finally have created a cancer within the church of God.

Jesus while sharing the last supper with his 12 chosen disciples shares a very intimate teaching moment with them, this is the last time they will be together before Jesus goes to the cross to be crucified. At this supper he is with his 12 disciples one who will betray him, and one who will deny him, but he shares this moment with them all because it wasn't about what they could do for him but what he was sharing with them. Love is an action word it is shown in how we treat one another not necessarily how you are treated.

Matthew 5:43–46 King James Version

'Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?'



Action, Love is an action word and Jesus needs us his disciples, his followers, his called out ones to show this corrupt world what it looks like, by living it not just speaking it. Worldly Love has been a major problem in the church since the beginning of the church that Christ established. Paul tackles this issue just like I am trying to tackle it by writing this study to a people that need to hear and learn that we are all God's chosen people but we cannot do Gods will our way we have to do Gods will Gods way. We have to love like God Loves, Live like Christ Lived, we have to model our Lord Jesus Christ, or we will find ourselves out of the will of God and only cause a spreading destruction of life in what was initially designed to produce life, instead of healing sick we are causing cancer within the body because we simply lack the proper application of the word Love.

The Apostle Paul writes a very powerful letter to the church of Corinth on the definition of love and tries to correct the way of worldly love in the church to a Godly form of love.

1Corinthians 13:1–3 New King James Version

'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.'

Paul starts by saying what love isn't. Love isn't what we do, it isn't even how we do. It is the foundation of why we do. If we have faith that we can remove mountains, able to speak eloquently and powerfully, have the ability to give food and meet others specific need, but if we do this with a thank you expectation, or for your works to be seen of men to receive self-gratification and praise

then Paul says you are annoying, and nothing. True love is given without expectation, **John 3:16–17 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.'**

Love was given to us offering us everlasting life. This is an amazing example of the giving of Love, God gave his only son and his only son gave his life to give us the chance to gain everlasting relationship with him in glory. Love didn't come into the world to condemn us but to redeem us!

1. How do you show love?
2. Where do you show love?
3. Who do you offer love to?
4. When do you show love?
5. Why do you give love?



LESSON TWO



LOVE

TEXT

1Corinthians 13: 4–8

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

Matthew 5: 43–46, 1Corinthians 13: 4–8, 1Corinthians 13: 1–3, Galatians 5: 22–23, John 3: 16–17, John 15: 9–17, Ephesians 5: 22–26

What is Love? What does it Look like? Well I'm glad you asked, Apostle Paul gives us an answer to these questions.

1Corinthians 13: 4–8

'Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.'

QUESTION: If love never fails, then why do marriages, relationships, and churches fail if they are built on love?

Remember Paul says the Love endures all things, when the Love of God is in you and in the equation then it's that love that will cause you to press through any obstacle and not to give up and give in. Marriages fail because they don't build on the Love that God has

required and given. **Ephesians 5:22–26 'Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, '**

Love endures all things! Nothing can break a bond or commitment when Godly love is the glue which holds it together. Love is so powerful because it is given to us by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit living inside of you to give you the strength to represent love in a dying world. Love is the first attribute listed in the fruit of the Holy Spirit that lives, leads, and guides the direction of his people. Galatians 5:22–23 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.'



QUESTION: Can you show love without total submission to the power of the Holy Spirit in your life?

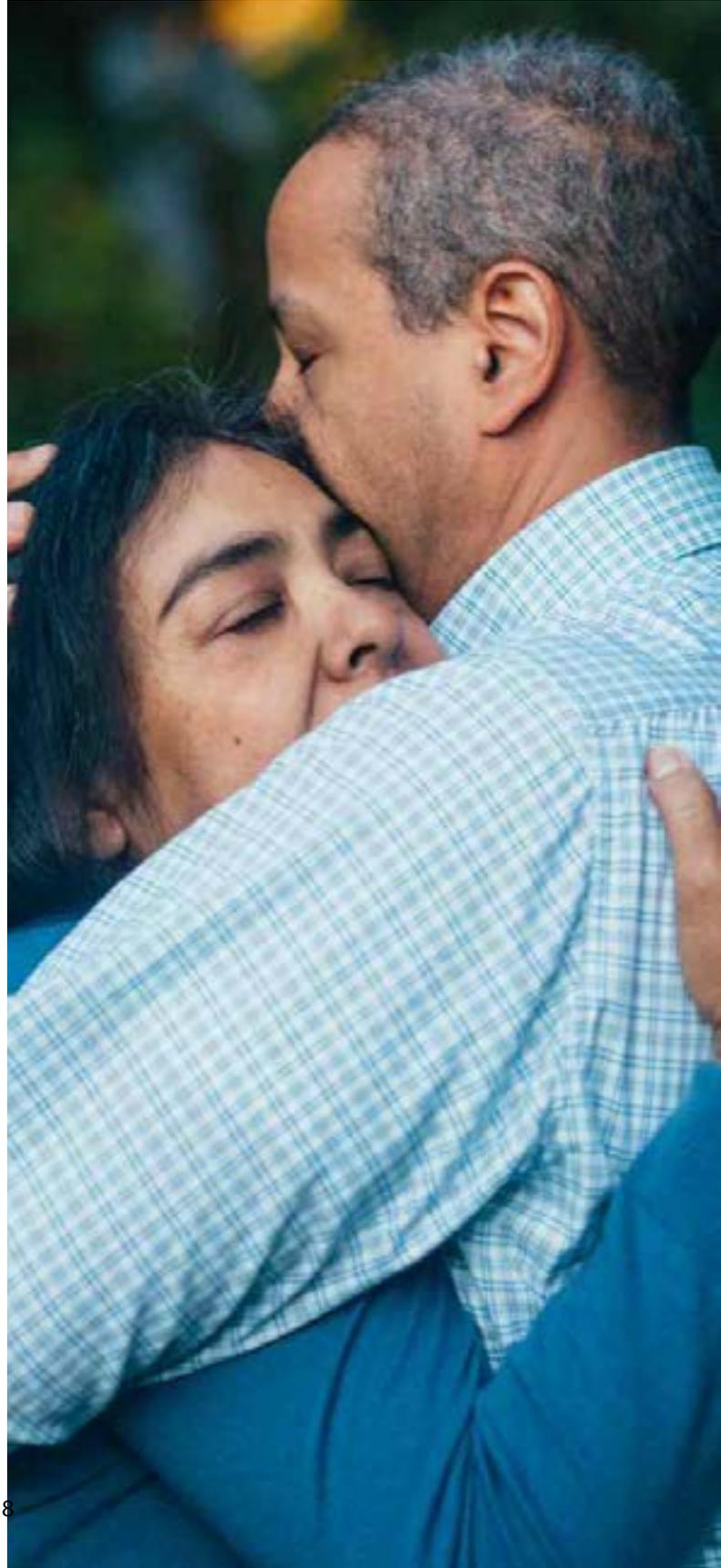
Once we learn as God's chosen people to express Love in everything that we do, including our thoughts and actions, we will start to see and be a part of the restoration of families, marriages, relationships and most importantly the church world wide. Jesus in his infinite wisdom gave the final commandment to his chosen disciples at the last supper after washing the disciple's feet by saying:

34 I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. **35** By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

This is a very powerful commandment given by our Lord Jesus Christ, we are to love one another in the same manner of which he has shown love for us. **John 15: 13** ' **Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends** '

The love that we show to one another all men will know that we are followers of Jesus Christ and his disciples. The world is watching how we interact with one another and when we begin to show love one to another as Christ has shown unto us the world will see Jesus Christ, be drawn into his love, accept his salvation and begin living as part of the kingdom of God.

COMMIT TO ACTION: Think about an area in your life where you can show the distinguishing love that Jesus talks about (read John 13: 35) and discuss.



LESSON ONE & TWO



MERCY

TEXT

Matthew 5:7

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

Matthew 5: 7,

KJV: Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

NLV: Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

—Matt 5: 7 (NIV)

MEDITATION MINUTE

Mercy is given by God, the foundation of forgiveness, and when extended to others, is an act of humility¹. Write down how the aforementioned quote has applied in your life.

SCRIPTURE CONTEX AND EXPLORATION

Mercy, in the Old and New Testaments, is always extended from the most influential to the least powerful. For example, the rich to the poor, the largest to the smallest, from God to us. During Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, He said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." The scripture, by the very essence in which it is written, requires that we are merciful toward others.

What does it mean to be merciful toward others? In essence, it means giving you Time, Talents, and Treasures to help those who are less fortunate. Perhaps that means tutoring your friends (Time), volunteering to paint a mural (Talent) or buying a meal for a classmate you notice never eats during lunch.

¹ Bible dictionary, p. 1106



Mark Bustos, a barber and founder of #BeAwesomeToSomebody with over 250 thousand followers on InstaGram

When extending mercy toward others, it is important that we are mindful of our egos as an ego not tempered by Christ can lead to arrogance. When extending mercy toward others, we put the needs of others before ourselves.



APPLY THE LEARNINGS

Watch the short Youtube video by CNN Business

“ Upscale stylist gives free cuts to homeless ”



Mark Bustos works full-time at a boutique salon, where prices start at \$150. On Sunday, his only day off, Mark goes out onto the streets of New York City and gives free haircuts to the homeless.



Application

True mercy is rooted in humility regardless of ones social status.To be merciful is to be forgiving and compassionate toward one another.

LESSON ONE



RECONCILIATION (FIRST WITH GOD)

TEXT

John 6: 40

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2: 16, Colossians 1: 20,22, Matthew 5: 23–24

“**For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life...**”
—John 6: 40 (NIV)

INTRODUCTION

To “reconcile” simply means to re-connect or restore. In the scriptures, the role of reconciliation is a serious and important matter in God’s desire and will that everyone be saved (John 6: 40). Despite the importance of reconciliation in the eyes of God, believers can sometimes find reconciliation difficult and nothing short of uncomfortable because it involves a confrontation of the issues that need to be reconciled, and surrendering in some cases self-justification for the sake of restoring the breach. It is often easier for one to diagnose the problem than it is to embrace the humility necessary to restore the relationship, but reconciliation always requires us to put God’s priorities ahead of our own.

The bible gives us even greater context of what it means to reconcile. There are two ideas that come through: the restoration of a previously harmonious relationship (Eph. 2: 16, Col. 1: 20,22) or to restore someone to a favorable/friendly relations after a presumed wrong. (Matt. 5: 23–24)

In both cases, **to be un-reconciled is not God’s intention for us** and that is clear (Matt. 5: 25, 2Cor 5: 20). If that is the case, then we can say with confidence that anywhere there is un-reconciliation is a place where God wants us

to do something about it and to do it immediately (Eph. 4: 26)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What do you see as the main barrier to reconciliation for Christians if the scriptures make it clear it’s important to God? (Take a few minutes to discuss)

In order to make reconciliation a priority in our lives, we must first understand and accept our reconciliation with God. Without this, it is impossible to make reconciliation a part of our lives as Christians. Let’s explore a little deeper.



RECONCILIATION WITH GOD

2Cor 5: 17 So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! 18 All this is from God, **who reconciled us to himself through Christ, ...**"

This is huge! We're familiar with the idea of Jesus dying on the cross for our sins, but first it's important and exciting to understand that we are able to be received by God the father (with all rights and privileges) because of the actions of Jesus who willingly took our place in the penalty of our sins! The scriptures say, *"in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us (2Cor 5: 19)."* We are reconciled back to God no matter how deep or horrible our past lives were (pause to reflect). We point out the obvious here because when we get to the scriptural mandate in lesson #2 to be reconciled with one another, it's going to become critically important that you have **a clear view of what God has overlooked/forgiven you of** by sending His son to die on the cross. (Discuss)

The second thing to remember about being reconciled with God is that we are reconciled in order to serve others (more to come on this in lesson #2). Our reconciliation is not just about making it to heaven or being declared righteous, but comes with the responsibility to help others recover also. Let's read Paul's message to the Corinthian church in **The Message Bible** (thought for thought manuscript translation): *All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other. God put the world square with himself through the Messiah, giving the world a fresh start by offering forgiveness of sins. God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. We're Christ's representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them (2Cor 5:18-20).* Read the following questions and discuss:

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the church's role in supporting reconciliation to God?
2. How do you see Jesus' reconciling us to Him changing how we think about others?
3. What do you see as the main stumbling blocks to someone realizing the benefit of being reconciled to God?

In preparation for Lesson #2, reflect on the idea that God reconciled us to Himself so that we could help others be reconciled.





RECONCILIATION (WITH OTHERS)

INTRODUCTION

It was a little over 12yrs ago when just about every news outlet in America carried as their headline the story of Charles Roberts. Charles, a dairy truck driver who apparently was nursing a 20yr-old grudge, entered an Amish school classroom in Pennsylvania shooting 11 people. Before the situation ended, Charles killed 5 school-age Amish girls before turning the gun on himself. Almost as shocking as the news of the killing itself were the stories of the Amish community's response. Many from the community attended the funeral of the killer to support his widow and afterwards, gave an "unspecified" financial gift to the widow of Charles Roberts. When asked about the financial support given to the widow of the murderer, a spokesman for the Amish said they wanted to "forgive the murderer". One community leader said, "... forgiveness is a journey, that you need help from your community of faith and from God ... to make and hold on to a decision not to become a hostage to hostility. He went on to further say, "It is understood that hostility destroys community."

The Amish spokesman was speaking of reconciliation when he mentioned the "journey" of forgiveness. As a reference point, reconciled means "to make peace" (diassomai). As mentioned in lesson #1, the road of reconciliation begins with the act of forgiveness, but forgiveness alone doesn't encompass the necessary work to bring the relationship back together. Be clear that the work of restoration belongs to God and He will accomplish its end, but He chooses to accomplish the work through you beginning with repairing the breach between you and Him (lesson #1). Reconciliation builds off of the root of forgiveness but involves putting back to the original state which requires real effort, time, and patience (take a moment to discuss).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Think about a time when you were involved in or caused a relationship to be breached/divided. What made it difficult to instantly resolve the situation?
2. How, if any, did God's relationship with you inform how you approached reconciliation? Did it ever get resolved and if so, what factors impacted how long it took?

Reconciliation goes far beyond saying you forgive someone or offering superficial smiles, but requires real work that often prevents the church (you) from operating in your full strength. To reconcile means choosing not to become a hostage to the hostility of the offense. Looking at the Amish community's response above, they forgave Charles Roberts the day they showed up for his funeral but what they were doing in supporting Charles's wife and children was something much more.





RECONCILIATION WITH OTHERS

So how do we move from hurt to reconciled? While people approach reconciliation from different vantage points and in different ways, there are some fundamentals that must be included to have the impact God intended when he chose to reconcile us back to Himself:

1. **Own Your Part In The Breach:**

Sometimes, reconciliation never starts because people stay stuck on trying to agree on who is to blame for the division. God's desire for mankind is that everyone might be saved (John 6: 40) but the enemy will use division to counter the will of God. That said, the first step is to find your part in the separation and own it! (this does not mean that you confess to causing the breach, but it does mean you recognize division is not God's will).

2. **Have a Sense of Urgency & God's Priority:**

"...if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. (Matt. 5: 23-24)" Much has been said about the importance and regularity of making offerings to God which is well placed. Jesus essentially says as important as offerings were in the worship of God, the relationships and reconciliation to others is more important in worship & kingdom building.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. As you think about the last two points, are there relationships today that are unreconciled? Discuss
2. What can others learn from your handling or views on reconciliation?



LESSON ONE



GRACE

TEXT

Titus 2: 11–15

“**For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world**”

—Titus 2: 11-12 (NIV)

ILLUSTRATION

A young Sunday school student was asked by the teacher, if he knew what “Love and Grace” meant. The young boy replied, “If I came home and told my mama, I was hungry and she gave me a slice of bread, that would be love. But If she put some jelly on it that would, that would be love and grace.”

SCRIPTURE CONTEXT & EXPLORATION

Grace has been generally defined as “The Unmerited or Underserved Favor of God.” This general definition poses some problems when we try and apply it to all scriptures in the Bible. For example, Luke 2: 40 reads “And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him.” How can we say that Jesus needed (unmerited or underserved) favor upon him?

A better definition would be “The empowering presence of God to do what we are called to do and to be what we are called to be.” (His manifested Presence) Now there is no question that after salvation, we need the help of God to maintain a Christian lifestyle. Before his Christ ascension he told his disciples, in John 16: 12 & 13a, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

Howbeit, when He, the spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.”

WHAT THE TEXT SAYS

It was the grace of God that brought our salvation and by His manifest presence, (The Holy Spirit). He would teach us how maintaining a Christian life-style, denying ‘ungodliness and worldly lust’, that we could ‘live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world’. Without this help Satan would continuously have us bound, all because of our sinful nature. I John 3:8 reads, “He that committed sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

WHAT THE TEXT MEANS

Chapter 2 & 3 of Titus encourages ‘Good Works’. The emphasis of this Epistle is not that we are saved by good works, but by his Mercy (3: 5) and justified by His Grace (3: 7). All Christian believers are to be “zealous of good works” (2: 14). Young and old, men, women, boys and girls, life-styles that are so righteous, that even non-believers would be made ashamed, “having no evil thing to say of you.”

—Titus 2: 8



WHY DOES THIS MATTER TODAY?

In nearly every New Testament Book, the Lord's return is mentioned. The first century Church looked for the immediate return of our Lord and Savior. Now more than 2000 years later, the Church is still looking for His return. Because, we have the whole bible, we understand that there are some things yet to be fulfilled before His coming, but His return is closer now than it has been before. We need to make certain that we are living in accord with His Will, His Word and His Way. Since no man know the day or the hour of His return, we need to be ready. There is one thing of which I am certain, that when you close your eyes in death, He has already come back for you.

HOW CAN WE APPLY THE LESSON?

Titus 2 Verses 1–8 provides a rubric that can be a start. Civil obedience to authorities, children obeying their parents and teachers. (obedience to parents, was the first commandment given with promise). Providing an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. Showing real character (Someone has said Character is what you do, when nobody is watching).



LESSON TWO



GRACE

TEXT

Titus 2: 11–13

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;”
–Titus 2: 11-13 (KJV)

MEDITATION MINUTE

Take a minute and write down how you would define “grace” according to this scripture.

SCRIPTURE CONTEXT & EXPLORATION

Grace has been generally defined as “The Unmerited or Underserved Favor of God”. This general definition poses some problems when we try to apply it to all scriptures in the Bible.

This definition is incomplete as it does not take into account how God has called us to behave in alignment with grace. Consider the following definition: Grace is the empowering presence of God to do what we are called to do and to be what we are called to be”. (His manifested Presence) Now there is no question that after salvation, we need the very help of God to maintain a Christian life style.

Grace comes from God and is something we reflect the light of grace on others.

ILLUSTRATION

Four volunteers are needed to serve as actors for this activity:

1. Narrator,
2. the Vice Principal,
3. Taylor, and Avery. Read through the short skit.

Narrator: Although Avery and Taylor were once close friends, time commitments to sports and taking different classes caused them to drift apart. Today, Avery and Taylor are more like acquaintances.

Taylor was scrolling on Instagram and saw that Avery posted a meme insinuating that Taylor was a thief. Angered by the post and feeling betrayed, Taylor asks for there to be a mediation in hopes of having the post taken down.

The vice principal calls Avery and Taylor into their office and it goes as follows:



Vice Principal: Alright y'all. I saw the meme Avery posted online accusing Taylor of being a thief. It's obvious that the rumors are causing some tensions between you two and I want to help y'all resolve it.

Taylor: I just want to know why you would post a lie about me online.

Avery: I didn't make the post, I just reposted it.

Taylor: Either way you know it's a lie so why would you repost it? That doesn't even make sense.

Avery: I don't know it was funny. I mean my bad.

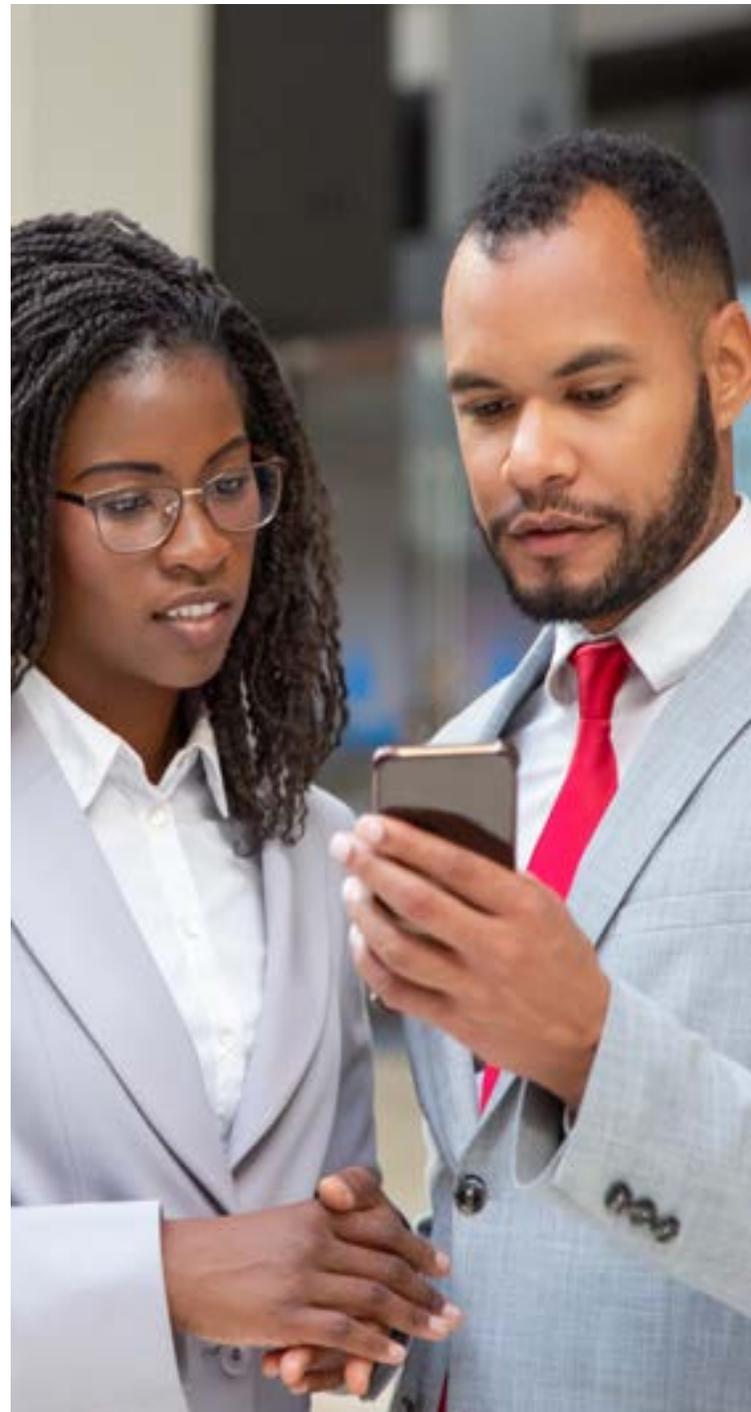
Narrator: Avery agrees to take the post down, however, Taylor continues to have negative feelings toward Avery. The following week, every time Taylor and Avery saw one another, there was unspoken tension between them.

PROCESSING QUESTIONS

4. Have you ever been in a situation similar to Avery and Taylor? How did you feel?
5. Has there been a time when an issue was "resolved" with the help of an adult, but internally you still felt conflicted or angry? How did you resolve that internal conflict?
6. Grace is the empowering presence of God to do what we are called to do and to be what we are called to be. Using this definition, how can you address current or future conflicts from the perspective of grace?
7. Our scripture text posits that the grace of God can literally teach "us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world." What are three things you can do to approach others in grace in times of peace? In times of conflict?

THINGS TO CONSIDER MOVING FORWARD

Not everyone is going to like you and you aren't going to like everyone. Consider naming the person or thing in your life that is a barrier to your happiness "Grace." This will remind you to walk in grace and help you keep Christ in the midst of what you do.





**“ Study to shew thyself approved
unto God, a workman that
needeth not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the word of truth. ”**
—2 Tim 2:15 (KJV)





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